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MEMORIAL

OF

Rev. R. M. WILLS.

GREENSBORO:

THOMAS BROTHERS, BOOK AND JOB PRINTERS.

1891.

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Funeral of Rev. R. H. Wills.

Services were held at the late residence of the deceased, on Saturday, November 7th, at 11 o'clock A. M., and were participated in by Rev. S. H. Hilliard, pastor of West Market Street M. E. Church, South, and Rev's J. R. Ball, W. F. Kennett and J. L. Michaux, of the Methodist Protestant Church.

Rev. J. R. Ball read the 90th Psalm.

The music, "Abide With Me," was sweetly and touchingly rendered by select voices under the direction of Mr. C. H. Ireland, accompanied by Mrs. C. H. Ireland on the piano, in strict and beautiful harmony.

Rev. S. H. Hilliard offered prayer and Rev. J. L. Michaux delivered the Memorial Address, which was followed by the second hymn, "I would not live alway."

Then the remains, in charge of Messrs. C. H. Ireland, J. S. Hunter, R. G. Glenn, Richard H. Brooks, J. A. Odell and Prof. J. Allen Holt, the pall bearers, were borne to Green Hill Cemetery for interment, where the concluding services were performed by Rev's J. R. Ball and W. F. Kennett.

MEMORIAL ADDRESS.

Rev. Richard H. Wills, eldest son of Rev. Wm. H. Wills, D. D., and his wife Anna Whitaker, was born in Tarboro, N. C., on the 10th day of October, 1836, and at the time of his death, at 3.15 P. M., November 5th, 1891, was aged 55 years, 3 weeks and 4 days.

The field of pastoral work on which he closed up the record of his ministerial labor was Haw River Circuit, which he was serving for the second year. He left home for the last time on Saturday, October 24th, and drove to Midway Church, in Rockingham county, a distance of 16 miles. He was by no means well when he left home, yet, notwithstanding this fact, such was the ardor of his zeal in his chosen work that he preached three times on the Sabbath and three times each on the two following days. The only explanation of this seeming imprudence and disregard of consequences to himself is found in the words of St. Paul touching his own labors:

“Striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily.” And in this from the evangelical Prophet: “For Zion’s sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.”

HE RETURNS HOME.

Suspending his labors at Midway on Tuesday night, Wednesday morning found him unable to leave his bed, but on Friday, accompanied by friends, he rode home sitting up in his own buggy, making the distance by 2 o’clock, P. M. Disease had set in, with strong symptoms of pneumonia, and Dr. Charles M. Glenn was called, who at once apprehended

the great peril the patient was in. The symptoms soon developed pneumonia, and the patient gradually grew worse. Dr. Glenn called to his aid Dr. E. R. Michaux, and the combined skill and united efforts of the two were earnestly given, but without avail.

PATIENT SUBMISSION.

Neither on his arrival at home nor at any time afterwards did the deceased utter a word that could be construed into a murmur, but on the contrary, his heart was full of gratitude and praise to God, whom he had so faithfully and zealously served, evidencing a submission and patience in suffering equal to the faithfulness with which he had performed the active duties of his ministry, ready for life or death, as the Master might choose.

IN THE BOSOM OF HIS FAMILY.

His wife and their five children—all sons—together with the several other relatives who comprised his household, were with him in his closing hours.

His eldest son, Prof. Geo. S. Wills, one of the faculty of Oak Ridge Institute, and his fourth son, Richard, a student at the Institute, came down on a visit to their beloved parent upon being advised of the serious nature of his illness, and their coming was to him a source of much gratification. William, the second son, was at Wilson teaching school, and he also came when he had ascertained that his father was critically ill. While yet unaware of William's arrival, the father, getting a glimpse of his form in the room, inquired who it was. Being told that it was William, he saluted the son affectionately, asking wherefore he had come, and when William replied, "I came to see you and be with you," the father replied with his accustomed tenderness, "This is a concentration of affection that makes me feel quite lifted up." At one time while suffering intensely he said, "My sufferings are infinitely less than those which Jesus bore for me."

THE HOUR OF RELEASE.

On Thursday, at about 2:35, p. m., it became evident that he was dying. Dr. Michaux, who happened to be then at his home near by, was called and went immediately to the sick room, but respiration itself came feebly and ceased altogether at 3:15. Gently, quietly, noiselessly, peacefully as the fading of a summer cloud, God's devoted servant quitted the frail tenement of clay to be clothed upon with the house which is from heaven.

It pleased our Heavenly Father to grant to our Brother what seemed a calm, quiet, painless breathing out of life, as if the weary eyelids had been closed under the touch of a gentle hand unseen. There was no struggle, no contortion, no groan, no sigh; no beseeching look for human aid, no glance that betokened the loneliness of the passage across the shadowy vale. The same expression of quiet, patient satisfaction, which he wore in health, and which continued with him in his last sickness, dwelt upon his features in the closing hour, and went with him to his dreamless resting place.

THE COMPLETE VICTORY.

But there is at least a plausible reason which may be assigned for the calm and undisturbed quiet of our brother from the first to the last of his sickness, and the absence of any mental conflict during his entire illness. The reason seems to be this: Very early in his religious course he had submitted his heart fully to God, had surrendered all his powers to His service, and had gained a complete victory over sin and the great Tempter, so that in the dying hour "the Wicked One touched him not." In this he was a partaker with his Divine Master who, having overcome the Tempter in the wilderness, could say of him as He felt the chill of his approach on the night of the betrayal, "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me." Thanks be unto God who giveth to His servants so complete and glorious a victory in the parting hour.

HIS ENLISTMENT.

Rev. R. H. Wills enlisted early in the service of the Master, being converted at the age of sixteen. The date of his license to preach is not at hand, nor yet the date of his first pulpit effort, but his first sermon was preached at Bethesda Church, near his father's home, in Halifax county—it is believed—in 1855, in his 19th year.

From this time on until the autumn of 1858 he filled the position of local preacher, aiding zealously and effectively in all the protracted and revival meetings within his reach.

POSITIONS FILLED.

He joined Conference at the session of 1858, was assigned to Tar River Circuit, and at Red Oak Church, Nash county, December 12, 1858, preached his first sermon as an itinerant from Luke ix: 23. He was returned to Tar River from the Conference of 1859, and at the Conference of 1860 was ordained deacon. From here he was assigned to Albemarle circuit, continuing thereon the second year, and the year 1863 he spent in rest at home. The years '64 and '65 he rode Haw River circuit.

On January 20th, 1864, he was married in Bethesda church to *Ann Louisa Norman*, daughter of the late Joseph S. Norman, of Washington county, Rev. W. H. Wills performing the ceremony. The year '66 he travelled Roanoke circuit; '67, '68, '69, '70, Albemarle circuit; '71, '72, Halifax. In the years '73, '74 and '75 he was President of the Conference. The years '76 and '77 he spent on Davidson circuit; '78 and '79 Winston station; '80 Tar River; '81 and '82 Greensboro circuit. During '83 he acted as stationed Executive of the District and pastor of Winston mission; '84 and '85 as travelling President; '86 on Mocksville circuit; '87 and '88 Greensboro; '89, President, and '90 and '91, Haw River circuit, his last work. Thus it is seen that he spent 32 years in active work. He was also a member of the General Conference of

1866, of the General Convention of 1877, and of the General Conferences of '84 and '88, besides serving as a member of the Joint Commission of the Methodist and Methodist Protestant bodies at Pittsburg, Pa., in 1876.

THE MAN AND HIS WORK.

Up to this point in this memorial the writer has found no difficulty, but to describe the man and his work—who can do that? No one, except in a very imperfect manner; yet an attempt is made to present some of the more prominent traits of his character, the first of which is his love and obedience to his parents, which, if space permitted, might be strikingly illustrated. Our deceased brother maintained to the last the most pronounced affection for his parents, and a short while before his death announced his intention of visiting, in January next, the old homestead to see his aged and widowed mother, remarking that his purpose was to visit her every year. To his honored father, while the latter lived, the deceased gave the utmost deference founded in filial love and respect; and it is questionable whether any great character can be formed without this element, which the apostle emphasises as ‘the first commandment with promise.’”

But this obedience and love to his parents found its counterpart, if not one of its sequences, in the tender affection, the mutual love and respect which adorned and beautified his own home.

HIS LOVE FOR SOULS.

Next after this was his great love for souls. He loved his fellow men because Christ died to redeem them.

He went about from place to place striving to win souls to Christ, and willingly sacrificed himself for the love which he bore to them. He yearned over men, and preached and prayed and wept in his great zeal to rescue them from the dominion of darkness. But he manifested a special love for

those who were of the household of faith, for his brethren in Christ Jesus, and for all the disciples of the Master.

HIS UNSELFISHNESS.

The great mainspring of this love for men is to be found in his greater love to Christ, whom he loved with an ardor most intense, and as a result of which he became as unselfish as it would be possible for a mortal to become. I speak conscientiously and deliberately when I say that RICHARD H. WILLS was the most unselfish person I ever met; and in this respect I have no hope of meeting his equal. I reach the conclusion of the unselfishness of our beloved Brother from having observed him closely for over thirty years, and repeatedly in connection with matters where, if selfishness had existed, it could not but have been discovered. I make special note of unselfishness for two reasons, one of which is that it is so rarely found with any near approach to perfection, even among christian men, and the other is that it is preeminently Christlike.

And possibly there is no one trait of character among men which presents so serious an obstruction to the progress of Gospel truth as absolute selfishness. Our deceased brother not only avoided this great evil, but clothed himself with its opposite, and exhibited it in all his dealings among men.

A LARGE HEARTED ACT.

An exceedingly generous act on the part of our Brother, an act which does not often find a parallel in a world all too prone to be selfish, claims a place in this brief tribute to this eminently Christlike servant of Jesus.

His immediate predecessor on one of the circuits, had, for some reason, failed to receive, by a considerable sum, the amount of the salary promised him, and for the lack of it was financially embarrassed. When the facts became known to Bro. Wills he at once set about to have the wrong done to his

brother righted, and at a comparatively early day, through his disinterested interference, had collected and paid over the principal part of the sum due, if not all of it, although he had reason to believe that it might entail upon himself a considerable loss on his own salary, which was small at best. This is only another instance in which our beloved brother showed how little the common infirmity of self seeking had place in his heart, and how he could lose sight of himself in the endeavor to advance the interest of another. And in this, as in many other prominent traits of his character, he was but acting in harmony with his divine Master whose image shone so conspicuously and so steadily in his life.

A CONSPICUOUS TRAIT.

But one of the most conspicuous traits in the character of our Brother, in relation to affairs purely practical, was his faithfulness in discharging, at the proper time and in the best manner possible, all and every one of the various obligations which, by disciplinary requirement or conference resolution had been devolved upon him. The simple fact that it bore the impress of competent authority secured his obedience at once, and his loyal heart had no further question, and for this reason our Brother was found faithful to every interest of the church, whether local or general, and he sought with the utmost faithfulness the highest success of all. And who of those who survive him can ever forget what he was in these things? Or who, again, will not duly magnify the faithfulness which so strikingly distinguished *him*?

PRAYERS AND INTERCESSIONS.

As a man of prayer we could not exaggerate the constancy and persevering earnestness with which he everywhere had recourse to the Throne of Grace, by reason of which he was always in the Spirit, always ready to every good word and work. He prayed without ceasing. Much of his praying

was of the intercessory kind in behalf of his fellow men, and one of the first thoughts that struck me when his great heart of love ceased to beat, was that now one of our most constant intercessors has been removed, and I was forcibly reminded of the words which God spoke to Joshua when Moses, the intercessor for Israel, died: "Moses, my servant, is dead;" and I trembled to think of the removal of one who was for us all the most faithful of human intercessors.

INTERCEDES FOR HIS BRETHREN.

It is related of him that during the years in which he served as the executive of the Conference he set apart a certain hour each day when he withdrew to some secluded spot, and there presented in earnest intercessory prayer, and individually, the name of every ministerial brother filling the various fields of labor, invoking upon them and upon their charges the grace that would fit them for success.

Surely, in our great sense of loss in the removal of our beloved brother we should take into the account what he was to the church by reason of his constant, earnest and persistent intercessions before the throne of God. But none of us can know how much we are indebted to those intercessions for grace and mercy from heaven until the affairs of time shall be wound up.

THOROUGHLY CONSECRATED.

His devotion to duty was complete and never failing. He was one of the most conscientious of men in all the affairs of life, taking the word of God as the rule of his conduct, and making the word his daily study, and imploring the light of the Holy Spirit to aid in the understanding of its mysteries.

One of the characteristics which distinctly marked him was his deep and unaffected humility, which arose, no doubt, from his clear views of the Divine Majesty and of man's immeasurable inferiority.

Richard H. Wills was a thoroughly consecrated man, and

in the highest sense of that term, and this consecration was manifested upon his first appearance as a preacher, involving his heart, his head, his hands ; his soul, body and spirit ; all he was, all he had, without exception and without reservation, for time and for eternity.

The thorough consecration of our beloved brother to the service of the Lord prepares us to expect that he would not fall behind in the grace of giving of his earthly substance to the support of the gospel ; nor did he fail in this, but was a pattern of liberality. At an early period in his ministerial course it appeared to him as a duty that he should devote the tenth of his entire income to benevolent purposes, and this he observed as one of the fixed rules of life, although it is believed that he went beyond this in his contributions to the various needs of the church. He first gave himself and then he gave all he had, to God.

As one of the consequences of this thorough consecration he carried with him the savour of Christ wherever he went—a meek, loving, earnest, tireless toiler for the salvation of men.

HIS CONSCIENTIOUSNESS.

Probably no one could exceed him in that high and essential quality of conscientiousness, which marked his actions in every relation of life, extending to great and small things alike, and which no considerations of self interest could pervert or extinguish. As an illustration of this point one incident is introduced. It is related by one of the assessors for the city of Greensboro. "Rev. Mr. Wills," said the assessor, "was an exception among the large number of persons who came to give in their taxables. He was just and exact in every particular, but when it came to the matter of notes, he did not merely report the face amount of the notes, *as every one else did*, but carefully and accurately calculated the interest up to the day, and added the interest to the amount of the notes." And this was to him but the everyday working of a conscience which was part and parcel of himself.

AS A PEACEMAKER.

But it deserves to be said of our dear brother that he exerted a fine influence everywhere as a peace-maker, not only in a direct, but also, on occasion, in an indirect way. One of his ministerial brethren who feels most acutely the loss which has fallen upon the church and upon individuals as well, gives this testimony: "Most sensibly shall I feel the loss of him in our Annual Conference, where his influence upon me was so wholesome and so potent. It is my failing to be excitable and hasty in speech, and to utter things which should be left unsaid. He was always calm, always cool, always self-possessed, and when he saw that I was about to act rashly he would come to me and hold me in restraint. How sadly now shall I miss his influence at such times."

HOW HE LOVED AND FOLLOWED THE MASTER.

And, dearly beloved, such things are but the true belongings of one who had imbibed so deeply of the spirit of his divine Master, and who bore about with him everywhere in more than a merely metaphorical way, "the marks of the Lord Jesus," and "the mind that was in Christ." His spiritual adornments were such as will be worn in the great marriage supper of the Lamb, whither he has gone.

In tracing the habitual closeness with which he imitated the great Exemplar of mankind, one is reminded of the saying of one of the more distinguished pilgrims in the immortal Allegory:

"I have loved to hear my Lord spoken of; and, wherever I have seen the print of his shoe in the earth, there I have coveted to set my foot too. His name has been to me as a civet-box; yea, sweeter than all perfumes. His voice to me has been most sweet; and his countenance I have more desired than they that have most desired the light of the sun.

• • He has held me, and I have kept me from mine iniquities; yea, my steps hath he strengthened in the way."

THE STRAIGHT EDGE

It may seem extravagant, but I think it is not, when I express the conviction that if the straight edge of the moral law, Moses and the prophets, Jesus and his apostles, were laid along side the life of our dearly loved and lamented brother, the disparity would be as slight as in a similar test applied to any human character—not of modern times, but of any time.

While as a preacher he was full, clear, evangelical, faithful, effective, declaring all the counsel of God, and enforcing the observance of every duty, leaving out nothing within the scope of christian obedience, he abounded in the related exercises of prayer and praise, and emphasised with wonderful zeal and spirit the devotional services of God's sanctuary.

The most precious memories which many have treasured up of our dear brother are, no doubt, in connection with the services of praise and prayer which he led with so much spirit.

THEY WILL REMEMBER.

And his brethren of the Annual Conference, who will see his face no more among them, while they remember how valuable he was to the deliberations of the body, how watchful, how attentive, how genial, how impartial, how intent on finding the best means for the accomplishment of the greatest good, will not forget how prompt he was to be present at the devotional exercises of the morning session, no matter how far were his lodgings from the seat of the Conference, nor how difficult the way over which he had to come. What an example for others, who in like instances have been careless and wanting. These are some of the very many things by which our brother will be long remembered, and which should admonish us for good.

SEALS AND CROWNS.

The preaching of Bro. Wills, faithful and full of evangelical truth as it was, and thoroughly imbued with the spirit of

consecration and re-inforced with the power of all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, would naturally be instrumental in bringing many souls into the kingdom ; and there were many seals to his ministry which shall deck his crown with never-fading stars in the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the abundance of his labors he was scarcely equaled by any man of his time, and if we take into the account the comparative frailty of his physical organism and the thoroughness with which he did his work, his achievement is a marvel.

INSCRUTABLE PROVIDENCE.

The Providence by which the Methodist Protestant Church is at this time bereaved of a ministerial brother whose place cannot in all things be filled, is inscrutable to us ; but it is the Lord's work, and to Him we must submit. To Him it may have appeared that our brother had finished the work of his life. He had made full proof of his ministry. He had fully set his house in order, in that higher sense of which Abraham was a conspicuous example, "commanding his children and his household after him, that they should keep the way of the Lord," thus rounding out his life as completely as if he had filled his four-score years.

But there is another thought which suggests itself, and which may be worth considering, as an answer to the inquiry, "why was our brother, at such a time, when his presence seemed so necessary to the interests of his family and the church, with no one to fill his place, taken away from us?"

This is offered as a solution : Among the many exclamations of loved ones concerning our brother when he had breathed his last, was this : "O, he has gone to be with that Jesus he loved so much ! How many times has he said that he had such a yearning to see the face of Jesus." And who can say, dear friends, but that Jesus accepted that longing desire as a prayer, and when it had been repeated a great number of times, at last, when our brother had grown weary in the bur-

den and heat of the day, Jesus called him that he might come up and see his face with joy. And who can say that this is not true?

GREETINGS IN HEAVEN.

The thought was expressed, a short time after the death of the deceased, by one who was nearest to him of all others, and who of all others best knew how ripe he was for that world, and how tenderly he cherished the hope of meeting loved ones there, that "by this time he has seen his father who went to heaven before him, and his brother and his sister, and my father and my two brothers; by this time he has seen and recognized all in the dear home to which he has gone." O blessed anticipation which cheers the hearts of the friends of Jesus, who, as parts of a family whose final home is in the Jerusalem above, go one by one through the fading years to find again and reclaim forever the loved and the lost. And this, O ye seekers of that blessed Elysian, is what is meant by the "Gathering Home."

IN CONCLUSION.

Conscious of the necessary imperfection of this sketch, by reason of the narrowness of the space permitted and the difficulties which always attend the performance of a task so many sided and so delicate, it only remains that we bid an affectionate adieu to our loving and beloved Brother, praying heavenly blessings on those who most keenly feel his loss, and expressing the desire that our end be like his, the beginning of Life Eternal with the Redeemer and His Saints in the Home Everlasting. Amen.

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APPENDIX.

[From Rev. T. J. Ogburn.]

HENDERSON, N. C., Nov. 20th, 1891.

I am not worthy or competent to write in this connection, of my dear Brother, the Rev. R. H. Wills. But as love may intrude where even merit may not, I venture to lay this simple flower upon his grave.

It will always be an inspiration to me to know that he was my friend. I loved him more than I did any other man. Coming upon my young life at its most impressible stage, gaining my full confidence, opening his pulpit to me in my sixteenth year, encouraging my weak efforts, kindly correcting some of my many faults and helping me over the rough places, he gave impulse and direction to all my future course and influenced me more than has any other human instrumentality excepting my dear Christian mother. To me he was the ideal Christian gentleman. His life was an exemplification of practical Christianity. As to any immorality, he was above all suspicion. The law of love was the rule of his life. Honesty, truth, purity, *all* the Christian graces, shone out in all his conduct and conversation. True to every trust, faithful to his convictions, fearless in the defense of the right, a friend to all good, a foe to all evil, you "always knew where to find him." "Steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord," his constancy and consistency were such that those who knew him best loved him most. The crowning glory of his character was his intense, abiding and all-inspiring love for Christ. Christ was all in all to him. He loved to preach Christ and did preach Him in every sermon. How radiant his face and how thrilling his voice as he would preach Christ! He loved to hear Christ preached. I think he was the best hearer I ever had. He talked of Christ, day and night; always and everywhere he wanted to talk about Him. His highest, his *only* ambition was to be like Jesus. His heart's constant yearning was to be *consecrated, sanctified, wholly devoted* to Christ. Without professing sanctification he *lived* and was the most devoted Christian I think I ever knew. Often he would catch a glimpse of the coming glory, and then with rapturous shouts he would praise the Lord. Now he is "forever with the Lord." He beholds His face in righteousness and is satisfied. Earth is poorer for his absence, Heaven is richer for his presence. We miss him here, but hope to greet him there, "some sweet day." May grace sustain and comfort his bereaved loved ones and us who mourn with them. And may his mantle fall on the Conference so painfully afflicted in his death.

[From Rev. W. F. Kennett.]

KERNERSVILLE, N. C., Nov. 16th, 1891.

Rev. R. H. Wills, as I saw him, was one of the most perfect christian characters I have ever known. I knew him first as my pastor, and he was a faithful shepherd of the flock. When I joined Conference he was President. His official visits to my circuit, (Buncombe) were an inspiration to the boy pastor. His words of counsel, his manifest interest in my success, still linger in my mind and heart. He was, to me, a father in Israel—a spiritual benefactor. I loved him as I have loved but few men. I loved to honor him while he was yet with us. I mourn his loss almost as I would that of my own father. I thank God for his beautiful consecrated life. I pray God to help me follow him as he followed Christ.

[From Dr. Ferree.]

WORTHVILLE, N. C., Nov. 20th, 1891.

I regard the late Rev. R. H. Wills as one of the very best men I ever met, and I feel confident that his place in the North Carolina Annual Conference M. P. Church will be hard to fill.

[From J. M. Cutchin.]

WHITAKERS, N. C., Nov. 23rd, 1891.

Bro. Wills loved Tar River Circuit, on which he began his itinerant life in 1858, and Tar River never thought more of a preacher than it did of him.

As for myself, I will say, I believe he was *the best man I ever knew*.

[From John C. Roberts.]

KERNERSVILLE, N. C., Nov. 18, 1891.

More than thirty years ago I became acquainted with bro. Wills. Though I was never under his immediate pastoral charge, yet I have heard him preach often; have been with him much at the fireside, in bodies of deliberation, and on several long journeys. I have thus had good opportunity to study and learn him in all his parts. I feel warranted in saying I have never known among men a better character than his. He was well equipped in mind, in heart, in energy and deportment for his high calling. He was all things, *innocent*, to all men. He was a faithful and conscientious exemplifier of the gospel he so earnestly and ably preached. Be it said to his imperishable

honor, that the sharp criticisms he had sometimes to endure resulted only from the courage of his convictions: He could suffer—he could not violate his conscience.

To the writer he seemed ripe, long ago, for a change to a higher life; but, it may be presumed, God detained him here to complete a goodly heritage for his family and his church. Thank God for such a man—for such a life! Death cannot sever him from us. There is a chain that binds us to him—the chain of everlasting love—and this love the Spirit's earnest of everlasting life. "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

RESOLUTIONS OF QUARTERLY CONFERENCE OF HAW RIVER CIRCUIT.

WHEREAS, it has pleased Almighty God to remove from our midst our much beloved brother, REV. R. H. WILLS. And

WHEREAS, we acknowledge the hand of God in all things, and that He doeth all things for His glory and our eternal good—

1st: *Resolved*, That by his death our Church has lost a faithful and consistent member and the Haw River Circuit a faithful minister, and that we bow in humble submission to the Divine will, remembering that he was a faithful preacher of the gospel.

2nd: *Resolved*, That we will ever cherish his memory, and trust that his sad and untimely death will lead many to the cross, and be the means of making us all purer and better.

3rd: *Resolved*, That we tender our heartfelt sympathy to the devoted widow and many relatives, and pray that this dispensation of God's providence may be sanctified to their good, and they may realize that he cannot return to them, but that they may go to him.

4th: *Resolved*, That a copy of these resolutions be spread upon the Journal of the Quarterly Conference of Haw River Circuit; that a copy be sent to the *Methodist Protestant, Daily Workman* and *Webster's Weekly*, with a request to be published, and that a copy be furnished the widow of the deceased.

J. F. DIXON,
W. O. SWAIM,
J. H. HUTCHERSON.

RESOLUTIONS OF HALIFAX CIRCUIT QUARTERLY CONFERENCE.

We, your committee, appointed by the quarterly conference of Halifax Circuit, in session on this the 13th day of November, 1891, cheerfully comply with your request in offering this tribute to the memory

of REV. R. H. WILLS: our former pastor, companion, friend and faithful minister in the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, whose life so forcibly declared that his one desire was to know Christ and him crucified, and through all the trials and conflicts of life could say with the illustrious Paul, "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

Resolved, That our hearts are sad because we shall see his face no more in the flesh.

That our church and the cause of Christ sustain a loss which can only be supplied by the wisdom of Him who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will; and we pray Him that he will raise up that help which shall more than fill the broken ranks.

Resolved, That we sorrow not as those who have no hope, being confident that our loss is his eternal gain, and that he has gone to that city which hath *foundations*; where with others of our loved and revered ones he is watching and waiting on the other shore for *each one* of us and for all those to whom he so faithfully and lovingly declared the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. One of his recent sermons preached at Bethesda is now fresh in our memory, in which he so forcibly and affectionately portrayed to us the truths in the text; "But he that endureth to the end shall be saved." His life and death bear evident testimony to its truth. In this, his native county, witnesses are not wanting among the rich and poor, white and colored, to rise up call him blessed, and to testify to his consecrated youth while at school and in his early ministry; no more attentive, affectionate and dutiful son, brother and companion could be found in all the land.

Resolved, That his departure leaves the world poorer, enriches heaven, and brightens our hopes and prospects for the better life.

We bow in submission to the will of Him who doeth all things well. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

REV. W. T. TOTTEN,
HARDY PITTS,
J. E. HUNTER,

Committee.

Brinkleyville, N. C., Nov. 16, 1891.

[From Rev. D. A. Highfill.]

In a well written letter of tribute, from Rev. D. A. Highfill, dated Nov. 12th, are found the following points of interest: "Rev. R. H. Wills conducted a protracted meeting at Flat Rock in the year 1865, in which at its close, it was reported that there had been no converts; but one, the writer of this tribute, was among the seekers, had passed through a change during the meeting which turned the whole course of his life. Under the change then and there wrought he entered the gospel ministry, and has labored therein for twenty years, during which time numbers have been converted and five or six young men influenced to enter the ministry of the Methodist Protestant Church. His public prayers seemed to be those of a person in close communion with God. He was a close student of the Bible, and evidenced a remarkable familiarity with its contents. He was a faithful preacher of the gospel. His sermons were plain, pointed and practical, and sometimes eloquent, but never sensational. He declared the whole counsel of God, depending upon the Holy Spirit to bless the truth and give it success.

"The Methodist Protestant Church in North Carolina has lost one of her ablest ministers. I never heard him preach a poor sermon. He always preached well.

"He unswervingly served the Church in every position that demanded his labors—as president of the Conference, representative in the General Conference, pastor of circuits, however weak and unpromising—in every position he performed cheerfully the labors assigned him. I believe he loved the Methodist Protestant Church sincerely and devotedly.

"In a word, he was a faithful, practical, earnest, conscientious, consecrated, devoted minister of God's word.

"O that his mantle may early fall upon some worthy young man His work here is done. He will go in and out among us no more! How sad the thought! How much we will miss him in our Conference deliberations and work!

"Farewell, dear brother. We hope to meet you again on the evergreen shore, where parting will be unknown forever. Amen."

[From Rev. S. W. Coe.]

RUTHSBURG, Md., November 25th, 1891.

I have known our dear Brother Wills since my boyhood. I have seen him in every relation in life and have studied his character from every point of view. I first heard him preach during his first

term as President. As a preacher he was able, always orthodox and thoroughly reliable, and as a moral philosopher he perhaps had no equal in the Conference. I had, years ago, set him down as one of the noblest specimens of a Christian and a Christian Minister. He was a man of prayer, and it may be said "he walked with God." His loyalty to the M. P. Church was never surpassed.

He was the embodiment of all that is true and noble in the highest type of Christian manhood. He will be greatly missed; may his mantle fall upon another. His death has brought sadness to our home. One of God's noblemen has been called from toil and labor to his reward. I am glad to be permitted to pay this tribute to the memory of this true and tried man of God and my own personal friend for many years. We expect to meet him again.

[From the Daily Workman.]

FUNERAL OF REV. R. H. WILLS.

Funeral services over the remains of the Rev. R. H. Wills, of the Methodist Protestant Church, who died on Thursday last, at 3:15 p. m., were held this morning at 11 o'clock from his late residence on Keogh street.

There was an appreciative representation present from the churches of the city, and from Oak Ridge, Fairview, Moriah and Tabernacle. A solemn and tearful interest was plainly manifest, and tokens of love, sympathy and respect were abundant.

Rev. T. J. Ogburn, of Henderson, came up on the early morning train to see the face of his beloved friend, but was obliged to return East on the first train to meet his Sabbath appointment, so that he could not be present at the funeral.

MEMORIAL SERVICES

HELD AT CONFERENCE, SUNDAY, DEC. 6TH, 1891.

Memorial services began at 2:30 o'clock p. m., Sunday, December 6, 1891. The choir sang hymn 189, "The Cleansing Fountain." Rev. W. A. Bunch read 23rd Psalm. Choir sang hymn 472 with chorus, "Rock of Ages Cleft for Me." Prayer by Rev. Benjamin Stout. The memorial address prepared by Rev. J. L. Michaux was read by Bro. W. A. Bunch.

Rev. W. C. Kennett said: "This death comes nearer my heart than that of any other outside of my family. I first met Bro. Wills thirty-one years ago; since then the relationship between us has ever been firm and close; I loved him deeply and truly. On the day our daughter died he had an appointment at our church. He came to our home that day, preached her funeral, and remained with us two or three days. He was rich in sympathy. He spoke to me in the hour of his bereavement, when his brother died, expressing his loss and grief, but at length exclaiming: 'If it takes afflictions to make me better let them come.' He was at the side of my wife's death-bed and offered prayer for us. He embraced me and said: 'Thank God for a religion that saves in death, thus tenderly expressing his sympathy in this sad hour.'"

Rev. G. E. Hunt said: "I am unworthy to speak of one so good, so noble. I first met Bro. Wills thirty years ago. He was then one of my best friends, and I feel that I have lost that friend. May we in this hour of berevement consecrate ourselves anew to the Master."

Rev. C. A. Pickens said: "In the year of 1860 at the annual Conference six or seven kneeled to receive the order of Deaconship. Bro. Wills and myself were of that number. While there kneeling I perceived that Bro. Wills wept, and doubtless he there re-consecrated himself to God's service. I am the only one of that number left. It makes me feel that I, too, must soon follow. I saw him a short while before he died. We talked long together. Soon after this I received a letter from my son saying: 'Pa, how sad it is; Bro. Wills is dead; we need him so much.' I dropped the letter, and with bowed head asked God to prepare me to meet him in a better world."

Rev. C. L. Whitaker said: "I owe my being in the ministry to-day more to the influence of Bro. Wills than to any thing else. Having

lost my father when I was an infant he always seemed as a father to me."

Rev. R. R. Hanner said: "I can not let this service pass without expressing my love and affection for Bro. Wills. I first met him in time of war. Fell in company with him on the train going to Conference. At Salisbury a young man under the influence of alcohol came into the train and was swearing. Bro. Wills said: 'Young man, have you not a mother? for the sake of your mother and these ministers do not take my Master's name in vain.'"

Rev. W. W. Amick said: "I distinctly remember the incident related by Bro. Hanner, as I was one of the number present at the time of its occurrence. Bro. Wills was a noble man. It is seldom that my feelings are so wrought upon that I can not speak, but my heart at this hour is too full for utterance."

Bro. Joseph Bagwell said: "It was my privilege when a mere lad to know Bro. Wills. My mother was converted under his ministry, as were a number of my friends."

Rev. F. T. Tagg said: "I have not been acquainted with Bro. Wills as long as many of you in this Conference. I first met him eight years ago at the General Conference at Baltimore. I almost instantly recognized in him the elements of a high-toned Christian gentleman. He possessed, in a remarkable degree, the elements of '*Suaviter in modo and fortiter in re,*' which went to make up Chesterfield's ideal gentleman. He was a man of great suavity and gentleness of manners, but equal firmness and decision of character. Consecrated to God, loyal to the church, faithful to his duties, he stood almost without a peer in his Conference. There is scarcely a man in this Conference who has missed him more than I. Between us there is an unfinished correspondence. The correspondence was of the most friendly and delightful character, but by mutual agreement it was left incomplete to be finished at this Conference. There is a weird and beautiful song called "The Lost Chord." It represents a lady at the instrument carelessly striking chords until suddenly she strikes a chord so strangely new and sweet, so different from anything she ever heard before that she repeatedly attempts to produce it again, but without success. The song closes with the interrogation, "Will that lost chord be found in heaven?" In coming here from the far South the inquiry has frequently crossed my mind: Will we complete that interrupted correspondence after awhile; will the lost chord be found in heaven? It can not be found here. There is another thought that has interested me. There is that in families which we call peculiarities. Physicians call it family idiosyncrasies, scientists call it the effect of heredity. It is that by which peculiarities are transmitted from one generation to

another. This appears in a marked degree in the family of Bro. Wills. The characteristics that made him a grand and noble character were seen in his father and they re-appeared in his children, one of whom is now studying for the ministry. What an incentive to practice a pure and upright life when the elements of such a life may be transmitted to on-coming generations. May the son be like the father in probity, honor, fidelity to God and loyalty to the church. It seems to me Bro. Wills has left a vacancy that will be difficult to fill. The simplicity of his character, the sincerity of his friendship, the unselfishness of all his motives, the fervency of his spirit, the faithfulness of his life, will make a vacancy in this Conference that will long remain. Let us so live that we who are here may join him in the upper kingdom, and all that love him dwell with him forever with the Lord."

Bro. Stout said: "It is a sorrowful thing to die. How our hearts are filled with sorrow to look upon the form of a little child laid in the coffin, its little hands folded over its lifeless breast the touch of its cold marble brow gives us a pang of sorrow, and as we stand in the valley and hear the sound of the clods as they fall together to hide the dear form from us forever in this world our sorrow is great—but how much greater our sorrow when one that has been endeared to us in a life of self-sacrifice and toil which embodied the noble traits of a pure life lies cold in death before us. Dear brethren, I am grateful that I am permitted humbly to present one flower to be placed in the tribute of praise that shall encircle the memory of Rev. R. H. Wills forever. I met him first in the city of Baltimore in May, 1877, as a member of the convention of the M. P. Church. He was chosen assistant secretary of the convention. I admired his calmness and faithfulness in the duties of his office. The last time I saw him was near mid-night (Sunday) on the street in Winston, N. C. I heard him preach that night in the Centenary M. E. Church an earnest sermon from Romans xii. chap., 2d verse: 'And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.' As we were about to part Bro. Wills in a tender manner expressed his deep interest in the cause of Home Missions, and that brotherly sympathy for me in all my journeys and labors that made me glad. We parted in the darkness of the night to meet no more here below, but we will meet him again—till then we will rejoice in the grace of God that will bring us home to sorrow and die no more, amen."

Rev. W. A. Bunch said: "Bro. Wills in his last correspondence with me was shown to me as never before."

The service closed with prayer by Rev. F. T. Tagg.

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